

This is a continuation of the Haustafel, or household duty code that began last week with one's duty toward government, and then the duty of slaves to their masters. Peter admonishes his audience to follow the example of their Savior, the Messiah, that they might follow in his steps.

Now he addresses family relationships. Peter sees the family as a miniature church, with the husband as representative of the Messiah and the wife as representative of the church. If the husband is not yet a believer, the wife is to win him over by her modesty and her conduct. The husband is to treat his wife as Christ would the church, so that his prayers would not be hindered.

: 1-2 Likewise wives, be subject to your husbands... In 2:13 the believer is to be subject to every human institution and to the rulers. In 2:18 Peter tells the slaves to be subject to their masters with all respect. Although the husband is not in the same category as the emperor and the wife is not in the same category as the slave, yet the principle of proper hierarchy remains.

This addresses believing wives of unbelieving husbands. As the gospel spread, women may have converted more quickly than the men in the society, and so mixed marriages were inevitable. Then the conduct of the newly converted wives would be redemptive for their husbands. Usually the wife would be expected to follow the religion of the husband, so her conversion could be a point of tension in the home. Therefore, right conduct would be less confrontational than words.

: 3-4 Do not let your adorning be external... In the traditions of the day a "good" woman would avoid excessive ornament, luxury, and superfluous clothes, which would characterize flighty women or women of the street. The Neopythagorean Phintys gave instructions about clothes, bathing, anointing, dressing the hair and decoration from gold and jewels. For whatever of a sumptuous nature is employed by women in eating and drinking, in garments and trinkets, renders them disposed to be guilty of every crime, and to be unjust both to their husband's bed and to every other person...The beauty which is produced by prudence and not by these particulars, pleases women that are well born."

Peter goes further in defining modesty. But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. Peter sees what God values, not just what the society values.

The heart kardias defines the hidden person. This is where the Christian's allegiance is formed and sustained.

1 Sam 16:6-7 For the Lord sees not as man sees; man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. See also Matt 6:1-18.

: 5-6 Here Peter reaches back to Biblical history for examples of holy women, especially Sarah, the wife of Abraham. See Gen 18:12 and Heb 11:11. Their hope in God was that they might bring forth the Messiah.

Now ones hope is in the Messianic kingdom. 7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way... The 'likewise' here could be translated 'in turn' or 'for your part'. In fact the whole phrase has been translated 'You husbands in turn must know how to live with a woman.'

It is incumbent upon us men to be understanding toward our wives. They see the world differently from us, a view that is complementary and not antagonistic in proper marriage relationships. The knowledge or understanding here refers to specifically Christian understanding of one's wife. It also has the sexual sense of knowledge, as in 'Abraham knew his wife, Sarah'.

...showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel...Here Peter extends his teaching beyond wives to women in general. Today we try to deny that the female is weaker than the male, but that defies our experience and logic. The only place for equality between men and women is in their relationship with God. We go through considerable complex distortions as a society to press for equality.

The curse placed on the woman in the Garden of Eden after the Fall is still in effect.

Gen 3:16 To the woman he said, I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

1 Cor 11:3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

Col 3:18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

I Tim 2:11-12 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.

...since they are heirs with you of the grace of life...Now Peter returns to the women who are the wives of the believing men in the churches in Asia Minor. Paul and Silas told the Philippian jailer that through his faith he would be saved and his household (Acts 16:25-34). The wives share with their husbands the great inheritance described in 1 Pet 1:3-9. We have individualized salvation too much as the American Evangelical Church. It is the church, the body of the bride of Christ, the temple, that is saved, not just individuals.

: ...that your prayers may not be hindered. The Husband, wife and children form a church in miniature. Where two or three are gathered in prayer there will God be also (Matt 18:20). Have you tried to pray when you are on the outs with your wife? Your prayers seem to go nowhere.

Here Peter devotes only one verse for the role of the husband. Paul deals with the role of the husband more extensively in Ephesians 5:25-31.

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own

flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."